

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Ron DeSantis
Governor

Scott A. Rivkees, MD
State Surgeon General

Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

Dear Teachers and Parents,

We value the health and well-being of all people within our community. As you may be aware, there have been several confirmed cases of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) in South Florida. In response, we are taking every step possible to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our community and are sharing this information with you to be vigilant and encourage your student to take preventive measures.

It is important to note that, the World Health Organization (WHO) did a study of the tens of thousands of cases in China, and less than 3% of individuals who contracted COVID-19 were children. Of that 3%, over 98% of those children only had minor symptoms. The Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County is working closely with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, municipalities along with local, state and national health agencies on prevention in the event an outbreak in our community should occur. We are sharing this information in the sake of transparency, so you are aware and can help reduce the spread of infection.

The Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County has established a call center to address questions from the public. **If you have questions about what is happening in Miami-Dade County, how the virus is spread, and what to do if you have symptoms, please call 305-470-5660.**

Additional resources are available through the Florida Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website which may be found at:

- [Centers for Disease Control Florida Mitigation](#) – Includes school guidance.
- [Florida Department of Education](#) – Information on schools, and helpful guidance.
- [Florida Department of Health](#) – COVID-19 updates.

The Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County takes this health risk very seriously. If cases of COVID-19 are confirmed in connection to the schools, we will immediately notify families and take steps in conjunction with Miami-Dade County Public Schools to ensure that the schools are safe for students and staff.

The best ways to reduce the risk of getting this or any viral respiratory infection include:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands;
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick;
- Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces;
- Stay at home away from others if you are sick;
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands; and
- Do not bring your student to school or come to work at school if you have cold or flu-like symptoms (elevated temperature, fever, cough, shortness of breath).

As the health of our community is our top priority, we will continue to closely monitor this situation and stay in communication with you. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County at 305-470-5660.

What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with confirmed coronavirus disease (COVID-19):

If you think, or the County Health Department tells you, that you have been exposed to someone with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19, follow the steps below to monitor your health and avoid spreading the disease to others if you get sick:

- Self-quarantine for 14 days
- Call ahead if you have a medical appointment, call the health care provider and tell them that you have or may have been exposed to COVID-19. This will help the health care provider's office take steps to prevent exposure to other people.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and throw used tissues in a lined trash can.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or, if soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Is it likely that COVID-19 will spread to schools?

The youngest case we have seen in the state of Florida so far has been that of a 20-year-old. Most cases at this time are still travel-related or are close-contacts of lab-confirmed cases. We are still recommending that schools focus on everyday preventative measures (like we would take with any type of contagious disease).

Handwashing, covering sneezes and coughs, and thoroughly cleaning any surfaces that are frequently touched are always recommended. In addition, school administrators should use this time as an opportunity to review and update their emergency preparedness and response policies.

What can parents do to decrease the chance of spread?

One action that could have the biggest impact with reducing the spread of this or any illness is to stay home if you are sick. Students who are sick should not be sent to school. Parents should create a contingency plan based on the needs of their family. This plan should focus on which parent or caregiver should stay home if a child is sick and also identify other emergency plans that could help in the event of an unexpected illness.

How can parents talk to kids about COVID-19?

Remain calm and reassuring. Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others. Provide information that is honest and accurate.

Give children information that is truthful and appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child.

Teach children everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs.

What can school administrators do to decrease the chance of spread?

- Make hand cleaning supplies readily available.
- Encourage students and staff to stay home if sick.
- Monitor absenteeism.
- Plan for digital and distance learning.
- Be prepared to temporarily dismiss or close schools and cancel events.
 - Short term dismissals for cleaning and contact tracing if you have a case.
 - Longer dismissals if you have substantial spread in your area.
- Plan ways to continue student services such as school meal programs if schools close.
- Stagger staffing or schedules to reduce in-person interaction.
- Work with your local health department for guidance on closures and re-openings.